

## So, You Want to Be a Recruiter

Who knows more about being a librarian than you do? Nobody, that's who.

The best recruiters are members of the profession. Seeing what you do, understanding it, recognizing your commitment to your job, realizing that it makes a difference in the life of the whole community - those are the best and strongest recruiting messages you can send.

There is more to recruiting than simply doing your job - you need to make doing your job visible to people you want to recruit, and you need to be able to talk about the things that are harder to see, like the training you received. This toolkit is designed to help you develop your own recruiting skills and to help you get other people involved in recruiting, too.

### Recruiting for diversity

This tipsheet focuses on recruiting for diversity. Many of the techniques and tips apply to recruiting in general, but if your primary goal is to recruit a more diverse workforce, there are some things to keep in mind. Diversity may be broadly defined simply as variety, but it is commonly used in connection with increasing variety. In the case of library staff, this often means increasing the participation of racial and ethnic groups present in the library service population but underrepresented in the profession. These recruitment tips focus on four major racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. - African American, Latino or Hispanic American, Pacific Islander or Asian American, and Native people of the U.S. and Canada.

Be truly open to people who are not exactly like you.

This is the essence of valuing diversity - you have to want to be around people who are different from you and genuinely feel the richness that comes from working alongside them.

Recognize the value of diverse recruiters.

Even as we seek difference, we need to be able to see ourselves in others. Recruits need to be able to see themselves in the position or profession of their choice. This doesn't necessarily mean that only "like can recruit like," but the most successful recruiters need to be able to reveal something of themselves that will prompt a recruit to say, "Hey, you're like me."

Know the variety offered by the profession.

Be prepared to describe the variety of positions and people already in the profession:

- \* jobs in urban public libraries, suburban library systems, in communities that want and need minority librarians, in academic libraries, in special and corporate libraries.

- \* jobs for people who want to talk to people, jobs for people who want to do research, jobs for people who want to specialize in certain subject areas, jobs for people who want to work with children.

- \* people in those jobs representing all racial and ethnic groups - not as many as we would like, but there are library directors, library school faculty, and all types of librarians of every hue. The statistics suggest somewhere between 10 to 15 percent of librarians across all types of libraries are from the four underrepresented groups, but individual examples are more important than the statistics. If you don't know or can't find a librarian in your own network that can talk with a recruit about being from a particular cultural, racial, or ethnic group, contact the Spectrum recruiting network ([sbalderr@ala.org](mailto:sbalderr@ala.org))

## Be Strategic

You already have a job and it probably isn't being a full-time recruiter. Set some goals, like "I want to increase diversity at my library" or "I want more minority students to attend library school in my state" or "I want to get more people recruiting for their libraries." Make a list of what you need to reach the goal - when will you start, what will you do, who else you need to do things. Then start crossing things off the list.

## Use, Build, Stretch Your Network

"Network" may be the most overused, misused, and still useful terms of the 1990s. First you need the "net" - a criss-crossing weave of people, knowledge, and relationships that can help lead you from where you are to where you want to go. But then you need the work - you need to be able to call on, cultivate, and effectively mobilize these people without spending every minute of your life doing it.

## Finding Recruits ... and Recruiters

In the case of recruiting for diversity, you want to look in two directions - for recruits and for recruiters. Sometimes you'll find both in the same place - and every recruit is a future recruiter.

The first and most obvious place to look is the library - library users, part-time and full-time library staff, students, family members and friends of employees.

- \* Prominently display recruitment materials like the Spectrum posters on library bulletin boards.
- \* Hold regular open houses that go "behind the scenes" to show potential recruits what being a librarian is all about.
- \* Find out what your human resources department is doing, can do, wants to do and get them involved.
- \* Make a library-supported scholarship available to a Spectrum recruit.
- \* Provide internships to potential recruits.

Look for people who are preparing to do something, even though they might not necessarily know what. Places to look include local high schools, technical schools, community colleges, and universities, but sending a mass mailing probably isn't the answer.

\* Try to find "points of contact" in your networks that can introduce you to students, whether by speaking to a class or informal group, inviting them to the library, involving them in library activities or outreach.

\* Explore community organizations and individuals that are respected and sought out for advice by the population you are trying to recruit. If you don't already have contacts, start to develop one-on-one relationships with school counselors, leaders of youth groups, church groups, YMCAs, and others who are involved formally or informally in helping young people identify and research career choices.

\* Focus on undergraduate students as the first step in a community-wide recruiting strategy - it will provide the quickest, highest return on your initial investment. This doesn't mean ignoring older and younger target populations, but start out by aiming your time and resources where they can do the most good. If you're concerned that your access to undergraduates is limited, remember we're not talking only about full-time students at four-year colleges (and that undergraduate degree is going to be a necessary first-step, no matter what).

Match your target populations to your recruiters preferences, skills, and contacts. Once you have a recruiting network up and going, you can diversify to other target populations and age groups.

- \* Decide if you are recruiting for your library, statewide, or nationally - whatever your range, be prepared to adjust it to fit the recruiting opportunities that present themselves.

- \* Identify both educational and employment opportunities for prospective recruits and involve educators and prospective employers in all phases of recruiting, from developing messages to delivering them.

#### Crafting Your Message

Do you know why you became a librarian? That's the best place to start. Don't just think you know the answer to this one - find out whether you can put it into words. Take five minutes and write down whatever comes to mind - it might be remembering an incident or event at a library when you were a kid or it might be something very different from that.

Read it over and see what you think - does it ring true? Is it something that someone else could relate to? Rework it if you think you need to and share it with a friend or colleague. Once you've got something you can hang your hat on, set it aside. Remember, this isn't just about you - it's about the people you're trying to recruit.

#### What Recruits Want to Know...

You're not a mind-reader. Be prepared with answers to commonly-asked questions, but any recruit worth his or her salt will have individual concerns and questions that go beyond whatever you anticipate. In response to those questions, the best possible response is -- "I don't know, but I can find out." (After all, you're a librarian!)

The fact sheet included in this toolkit offers a number of frequently-asked questions and answers. Resources for tracking down answers to other questions, both your own and those posed by recruits, are outlined in the Additional Resources list.

#### Deliver Your Message

This is a little like being all dressed up with no place to go. You've figured out what you want to say and who should hear it. All that's left is the Nike commercial - "Just do it!" It's not quite that simple, but almost. If you've done your homework and your network, you already have people and places in mind. Run through the following checklist to help decide how your message can be delivered most effectively and who the messenger should be.

#### Self-test your style

- \* Are you more comfortable talking to people one-on-one or talking to a group?
- \* Do you do any public speaking?
- \* When was the last time you spoke to a group of young people?
- \* Are you the kind of person who remembers to send notes to people to say thank you or just hello?
- \* How good are you at listening to what someone is really saying, picking up on what they might not be saying right out?

Be as honest as you can in answering these questions - no one says recruiting has to be done from a podium in the front of a large auditorium. If your strengths are in personal communication and listening, find a way to talk to recruits one-on-one. If you are a great speaker but not so good on following up on the details, make a speech from the front of the room, but get other people

to staff the information table at the back of the room. There are roles in recruiting for every personality type.

#### Follow Through

Don't let all your hard work go to waste by getting someone interested and then losing interest yourself. The first step in finding a way to stay in touch with prospects is making sure you have a way to contact them - whether you plan to hold follow-up sessions or send personal notes, either way you need an address!

Develop some kind of "sign-up" card for all prospects that includes name and mailing address, phone/fax/email, date/time of first contact, areas of interest, current educational level, and other info you think might be helpful. If you can, create a simple database - but if that's not your style, file the cards in a recipe box or bundle them up with a rubber band.

Think about realistic next steps.

- \* Does it make sense for you to contact prospects again or should you try to put them in touch with someone else?
- \* Are there specific questions you promised to answer?
- \* Can you send out a standardized information packet?
- \* Do you have permission to pass addresses along to a college or university?
- \* Develop some kind of timetable for keeping in touch with prospects.
- \* Even after your recruits have enrolled in or started library school, your job as a recruiter isn't over - keep them in mind for jobs and put them in touch with others in the profession who can serve as mentors and colleagues.